

Postponement Sought for Trial of Ex-CIA Official

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

Lawyers for Clair E. George, the former chief of CIA clandestine services, accused in the Iran-contra scandal, asked yesterday for a delay in his criminal trial that had been set for July 13.

U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth indicated he would grant a postponement, but did not set a new date. George's lawyers told him they needed more time to review 15,000 pages of prosecution witness statements that independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh's office provided them on Friday.

Lamberth told George's chief defense lawyer, Richard A. Hibel, that "to some extent, I think it's a

problem of your own making." The judge pointed out that the prosecutors had offered Hibel the records earlier, but Hibel had declined to accept them.

George faces trial on nine felony counts of lying and obstructing congressional and grand jury investigations of the Iran-contra affair. The scandal involved the Reagan administration's covert resupply network for the contra rebels in Nicaragua, secret U.S. arms-for-hostages deals with Iran and the diversion of profits from those deals to the contra cause.

At the 2½-hour pretrial hearing yesterday, Lamberth made public a sanitized 30-page ruling on the classified documents to be used at the

trial. The ruling showed the CIA, despite its professed new dedication to "openness," is insisting on blanket secrecy for one of its best-known features: the existence of CIA stations abroad.

Wherever the word "station" had appeared in government and court documents involved in the case, it was deleted and substituted with "CIA." George objected to this practice, Lamberth said, but had failed to show that the existence of a station in a certain country "has any relevance to his case."

At the same time, the judge said he did not want the jury to be confused about what actions and knowledge could be imputed to "CIA field officers as opposed to CIA head-

quarters." The ruling suggested that a substitute phrase, such as "CIA field personnel in Central America," would be acceptable.

Lamberth said the CIA also intends to censor "all references to various constituent parts of the Latin American affairs division of the CIA and of the Central American task force."

George, the order, related, has argued that he needs to be able to identify the offices with operational responsibility for various tasks at issue in the case and thus show he was not involved in many of the details of his subordinates' operations.

Lamberth said substitute wording indicating the status of such units, without disclosing their exact names or acronyms, would suffice.